

Provolt Volunteer Team on the job at the recreation site

BY TOM CARSTENS

When the Grants Pass office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) opened the Provolt Recreation Site four years ago, the Applegate community embraced this new opportunity for access to the Applegate River. The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) was already doing riparian restoration there and offered to help.

Right away, a group of community members formed the Provolt Volunteer Team to work with BLM under the APWC to expand the recreational opportunities at the site.

Elizabeth (Liz) Shen and her husband had recently moved to the Provolt area from Anchorage, Alaska, and Liz was eager to contribute to the effort. An environmental consultant in her previous life, Liz saw this as a wonderful opportunity to use her skills in her new neighborhood. An added benefit was the ready-made circle of like-minded friends who had also recently joined the team. Liz and the rest of the volunteers rolled up their sleeves and went right to work to help BLM develop the site, formerly a federal timber seed orchard.

Soon after opening, things got busy. Fresh signage and fencing went in; nest boxes for songbirds houses were built. The Volunteer Team cut a riverwalk trail along the river. Anglers discovered new fishing sites on the river. Wildlife enthusiasts and bird watchers started to explore their new nature preserve. Hikers, bikers, and equestrians began to investigate the existing trails. Swimmers and kayakers literally jumped right in at the new small boat ramp where the river flow is inviting and gentle. Picnic tables were procured for the many families who wanted to enjoy a lunch and an afternoon beneath the leafy cottonwoods lining the riverbank.



Elizabeth Shen tries out the latest batch of park benches ready for installation. Photo: Tom Carstens.

Three years ago, Liz took over as leader of the Provolt Volunteer Team. She loves being involved in such an active community and connecting with a dedicated group of folks with such varied backgrounds and interests. Since Liz has been in charge, the team has made improvements to the well-used riverwalk trail, aided in the development of new interpretive signs, and helped to eradicate invasive weeds. The team has cleared blackberries, mowed vegetation, and installed benches—all to create peaceful rest sites on the banks of the river.

Lots of different groups have joined in the fun. A troop of Medford Boy Scouts built a walking trail. The Oregon Hunters Association installed boxes for wood ducks. The Sourdough Chapter of Back Country Horsemen developed horse trails. Osprey platforms overlooking the river



From left to right: Joy Rogalla, Kelly Peduzzi, and Beate Foit apply sealant to a new picnic table. Photo: Elizabeth Shen.



The Provolt Volunteer Team builds the riverwalk trail. Photo: Elizabeth Shen.

Led by Cate Bendock (left) and Annette Parsons, Whiskey and Cosmos pack cement for the riverwalk bench pads. Photo: Elizabeth Shen.



were built by Pacific Power. A life jacket donor station was set up by the Applegate Volunteer Firefighters Association.

Hard work is beginning to pay off

The site now boasts many more picnic tables, rest benches, expanded parking, and a new vault toilet. It's a great opportunity to get the kids out of the house and into the wild.

Speaking of kids, both the BLM and APWC sponsor distinct programs to support children's education at the site. They draw schoolchildren from all over the Rogue Valley to learn how to apply science, restore wildlife habitat, and design service projects at the site. New pollinator gardens, bird houses, bat boxes, and more are all in the works!

A new batch of benches were just delivered, and Liz's team will soon be installing these along the riverwalk trail.

Liz is proud that the site is now open to the public seven days a week, sunrise to sunset. This recent development was made possible only because her team volunteered to assist BLM caretakers in opening and closing the gates.

What's coming in the future? Liz would like to see more opportunities for wildlife viewing, expanded equestrian facilities, and a shelter to accommodate outdoor education. BLM intends to eventually open more of the 300-acre site to the public.

Long-range planning documents include the possibilities of a disc golf course, an interpretive center, and a pedestrian bridge across Williams Creek. This bridge would lengthen the riverwalk and expand access to the Applegate River downstream of the present site.

There's a lot going on!

Tom Carstens

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Interested in becoming a Provolt volunteer?

The team welcomes new members, and it's a lot of fun!

Feel free to email Liz at liz_shen@hotmail.com or the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council at provoltvolunteerteam@apwc.info.

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